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NEPAL'S ANTI-CORRUPTION BODY SEALS PASHUPATI TEMPLE OVER MISSING GOLD

The government ordered an inquiry after some reports said that 10 kilogrammes of gold were missing from an ornament weighing 103 kg

ORNAMENT TAKEN FOR EXAMINATION

The ornament called Jalhari was installed around a Shivling inside the temple during the Maha Shivaratri festival last year. Temple official said the ornament was taken by the anti-graft body to determine its quality and weight. Devotees were not allowed to enter the temple premises on Sunday afternoon and sources said the temple will remain closed until midnight

SOLDIERS DEPLOYED AT TEMPLE PREMISES

- The government ordered the Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority to begin probe after questions were raised in Parliament on reports that substantial chunks of gold were missing from the ornament
- Dozens of security personnel, including Nepal Army soldiers, were deployed at the premises of the temple, which is the oldest in Kathmandu

1692

WHEN THE PRESENT STRUCTURE OF THE TEMPLE WAS BUILT

CHENNAI • MADURAI • VIJAYAWADA • BENGALURU • KOCHI • HYDERABAD • VISAKHAPATNAM • COIMBATORE • KOZHIKODE • THIRUVANANTHAPURAM • BELAGAVI • BHUBANESWAR • SHIVAMOGGA • MANGALURU • TIRUPATI • TIRUCHY • TIRUNELVELI • SAMBALPUR • HUBBALLI • DHARMAPURI • KOTTAYAM • KANNUR • VILLUPURAM • KOLLAM • TADEPALLIGUDEM • NAGAPATTINAM • THRISSUR • KALABURAGI

Strategic partnership to boost India-Egypt ties

YESHI SELI @ New Delhi

INDIA and Egypt on Sunday elevated their relationship to a 'strategic partnership' after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi held extensive talks on enhancing political as well as security cooperation between the two countries.

Apart from the pact on strategic partnership, three other MoUs were also inked during PM Modi's visit to Egypt.

"An agreement to elevate the bilateral relationship to a 'strategic partnership' was signed by the two leaders. Besides, three memoranda of understanding were signed in agriculture, archaeology and antiquities and competition law," Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra said.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi confers Prime Minister Narendra Modi with the highest state honour of Egypt 'Order of the Nile' in Cairo on Sunday | PIB

Notably, Modi was conferred 'The Order of the Nile', Egypt's highest state honour reserved for heads of states, crown princes, and vice presidents who offer humanity invaluable services.

"It is with great humility that I accept the Order of the Nile. I thank the government and the people of Egypt for this honour. It indicates that warmth and affection they have towards India and the people of our nation," the prime minister said.

The Prime Minister held talks with President el-Sisi at Al-Ittihadiya Palace in Cairo, during which the two leaders discussed ways to enhance political and security cooperation, defence collaboration, trade and investment ties, scientific and academic exchanges.

They also agreed that the newly established 'India Unit' in Egyptian Cabinet would be a useful tool in steering bilateral collaboration.

"My visit to Egypt was historic. It will add renewed vigour to India-Egypt relations and benefit our people," Modi tweeted. He invited el-Sisi to attend G-20 Summit in New Delhi in September.

Army frees 12 militants in Manipur to end stand-off

Leaves with captured arms after being stopped by 1,500-strong mob

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @ Guwahati

THE Army released 12 militants in Manipur in the wee hours of Sunday to end a standoff with a 1,500-strong mob led by women. The mob had surrounded the Army column at Itham village in Imphal East district and prevented the forces from leaving with the captured militants.

A defence ministry statement said the forces took a 'mature decision' to avoid collateral damage, which showed the 'humane face' of the Army.

The 12 militants belong to the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL), an Imphal valley-based insurgent group. The forces had detained them during an operation in the village that was carried out following specific intelligence inputs.

"Specific search after laying cordon was undertaken to avoid hardships to other locals. In the ensuing operation, 12 KYKL cadres were apprehended along with arms, ammunition and war-like stores," the defence ministry statement said.

It said the rebels apprehended included a self-styled 'Lt Col' Moirangthem Tamba alias Uttam, the alleged mastermind of the ambush on the personnel of Dogra regiment in 2015.

"A mob of approximately 1,200-1,500, led by women and a local leader, immediately surrounded the target area and prevented security forces from going ahead with the operation. Repeated appeals to the aggressive mob to let the security forces carry on with operation as per law did not yield any positive result," the defence ministry statement said.

The Army said keeping in view the sensitivity of use of a kinetic force against a large irate mob and likely casualties, a considered decision was taken to hand over all the 12 rebels to the local leader.

Subsequently, the personnel lifted the cordon and left the area with the weapons and war-like stores recovered from the insurgents.

"The mature decision on the part of the Operational Commander shows the humane face of the Indian Army to avoid any collateral damage during the ongoing unrest in Manipur," the statement said.

The Army appealed to people in Manipur to assist the security forces in maintaining law and order and to bring peace and stability.

Talk to locals, says Cong

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh on Sunday said the Centre must initiate dialogues with locals to earn their trust and restore peace. He said the process may take time but the govt should start listening to the communities | P8

Shah briefed on 'evolving' situation

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi / Guwahati

MANIPUR Chief Minister N Biren Singh on Sunday met Union Home Minister Amit Shah and briefed him about the latest situation in the state and the 'evolving' situation as well as changing equations with the community leaders who have been engaged in the ethnic conflict since May 3.

This comes a day after Shah chaired an all-party meeting in the national capital to discuss the Manipur situation.

Singh told Shah that he will reach out to all stakeholders.

Shah advised the Manipur leadership to work with more vigour so that there is complete peace. He also assured him that the Centre will take all possible steps to bring normalcy in the violence-hit state.

Manipur MP Leishemba Sanajaoba, Speaker Thokchom Satyabrata Singh, BJP's national spokesperson and Northeast coordinator Sambit Patra, and Intelligence Bureau chief Tapan Kumar Deka were also present in the meeting, which lasted about 45 minutes.

Gauhati HC stays election process of WFI

FIROZ MIRZA @ Chennai

IN a dramatic turn of events, the Gauhati High Court on Sunday stalled the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) election till the next date of hearing. The court has fixed July 17 as the date.

The Assam Wrestling Association, in its writ petition filed against the Indian Olympic Association-formed ad-hoc panel running the day-to-day affairs of the WFI and the sports ministry, contended that the state unit was entitled to be an affiliated member of the federation but was not granted the same despite repeated requests.

The returning officer appointed to conduct the elections had earlier rejected the Assam unit's claim. It had also fixed June 25 as the last date for receiving the names for the electoral college for elections on July 11. It is understood that a request was made to the Gauhati HC Chief Justice for urgent consideration of the matter and he constituted a special bench of Justice Nani Tagia to take up the matter on Sunday despite it being a holiday. P11

It could be PDA vs NDA in 2024 LS polls

RAMASHANKAR @ Patna

THE coalition of Opposition parties formed to fight the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance in 2024 Lok Sabha election could be named Patriotic Democratic Alliance (PDA), sources said on Sunday.

The name was proposed by CPI general secretary D Raja during the meeting of Opposition parties in Patna on Friday. No other participants opposed the name proposed by Raja, Bihar Congress spokesperson Asit Nahti Tiwari said.

However, Opposition leaders are expected to suggest more names before their next meeting in Shimla next month, when a final decision will be taken on regarding the name.

In all, 32 leaders from 15 parties attended the meeting in Patna, convened by Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, during which Opposition parties resolved to take on the BJP unitedly, even as fissures emerged with the Aam Admi Party asserting that it would be difficult for it to be part of any such gathering in future till the Congress publicly supports it on the ordinance issue.

Meanwhile, former deputy chief minister and BJP MP Sushil Kumar Modi accused the state government of removing more than 100 hoardings erected by his party workers and intimidating them ahead of the grand conclave of Opposition leaders.

> They (BJP) understand there is discontent across the country which is growing and the Karnataka election results mark the beginning of the defeat of the BJP
>
> D Raja, CPI general secretary

Don't take opinions of only elite to shape B'luru: Group to DKS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN the backdrop of Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar making efforts to restore the image of Bengaluru, the Environment Support Group (ESG), a Bengaluru-based non-governmental organisation, has written to him, urging him to institute a process to ensure the city is governed and administered democratically.

The group, which has environmentalists like Leo Saldanha, pointed out, "Karnataka has placed trust in the past in a network of rich and famous personalities drawn from IT/BT sector, film and entertainment industry, real estate developers and the like to imagine what is right for Bengaluru. This initiative which took the form of Bangalore Agenda Task Force in the S M Krishna-led administration during 1999-2004 resulted in privileging elite interest and diverting financial resources to projects that favoured their imaginations thus denying the masses their rightful benefits."

The letter stated that the B S Yediyurappa government too attempted a similar approach through Agenda for Bengaluru Infrastructure and Development Taskforce and the Plan Bengaluru 2020. But that resulted in skewing resources -- financial, human and material -- to serve the cause of the elite.

They pointed out that Shivakumar has pushed ahead with creating forums to seek views of the elite in shaping the future of the metropolis knowing well that this is undemocratic and unconstitutional. The ESG batted for the constitution of the Metropolitan Planning Committee to take all necessary measures to ensure democratic governance of Bengaluru through an elected council.

WAITING OUT THE STORM

Fishing boats secured at a jetty, in anticipation of heavy rain, at Sultan Battery in Mangaluru on Sunday. Fishing is banned in the coastal areas of Udupi and Dakshina Kannada districts due to the monsoon | EXPRESS

17 resorts, restaurants demolished at Hampi

AMIT S UPADHYE @ Hubballi

AUTHORITIES in Hampi have brought down 17 resorts and restaurants in and around the heritage area of Hampi over the last one week. All these resorts were running despite notices served to them three months ago.

They were running within the Unesco-protected zone and buffer areas. The operations were carried out in Sanapur, Anegundi in Koppal and Kamalapur and Kaddirampur areas in Vijayanagara districts.

The authorities said that apart from homestays, resorts and hotels, several hospitality structures that were constructed in front of many houses were also razed. The government has already offered alternative land and planned a tourism zone at a village in Koppal district. CONTINUED ON: P4

Man drinks friend's blood for revenge

ENS @ Chikkaballapur

A man took his friend to an isolated place and tried to drink his blood after making a small cut on his neck. The incident occurred at Suddapalli Cross of Chintamani taluk in Kolar district, and the police arrested two persons in this connection.

The accused, Vijay Kumar, hailing from Bathalapalle, and Maresh from Madanpalle, reside in Chintamani town and are both drivers.

Sources said that recently, Vijay came to know that Maresh allegedly had a relationship with his wife. He wanted to avenge the humiliation and hatched plans to kill his friend. Accordingly, he invited Maresh, took him to an isolated place, made a small incision on the neck and drank the blood oozing from the wound. As he was performing the act, he asked Maresh to videograph the entire incident on the mobile phone.

The incident occurred three days ago. The police arrested Vijay and another person. Maresh is out of danger.

EXPRESS READ

Nirmala questions Obama over remarks

NEW DELHI: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday slammed former US president Barack Obama's statement about minority rights in India, saying his remarks were surprising as six Muslim-majority countries had faced US "bombing" in his tenure. She said PM Narendra Modi has received awards from 13 countries.

Dr Raj's kin Suraj seriously injured in road accident

MYSURU: Kannada matinee idol Dr Rajkumar's relative and actor Suraj Kumar aka Dhruwan was seriously injured in a road accident on Mysuru-Gundlupet highway near Begur on Saturday. According to sources, doctors have amputated his right leg which was damaged in the accident. Suraj was riding his bike when he was hit by a tipper.

Flash floods wreak havoc in Himachal

Shimla: Flash floods triggered by a cloudburst in Himachal's Solan and Hamirpur districts and heavy rain in Shimla, Mandi and Kullu on Sunday killed two persons, damaged crops, homes and vehicles, and washed away livestock, the State Emergency Operation Centre said. The state is estimated to have losses to the tune of ₹78 lakh in the past 24 hours, officials said | P8

THE MORE THE MERRIER

K'taka's lion-tailed macaque population highest in world

A study finds that the number of LTMs in Shivamogga and Uttara Kannada has been stable | EXPRESS

SUBHASH CHANDRA NS @ Karwar (Uttara Kannada)

KARNATAKA has the world's largest population of lion-tailed macaques (LTMs) with 41 groups of 730 individuals, according to a study by the Karnataka Forest Department and Coimbatore-based Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON).

The study gave a big boost to conservation efforts as it found that the population of LTMs in the Sharavathi Valley Lion-Tailed Macaque Sanctuary (SV-LTMS), spread across Shivamogga and Uttara Kannada districts, has been stable with more groups being added, as compared to the previous study. The earlier study in 2015 had put the population of LTMs at 30 groups with a little over 600 individuals.

The latest study was conducted in December 2022, covering Sirsi-Honnavara and Shivamogga forest divisions. Volunteers and forest department staff walked through 72 grid cells in the evergreen forests of the Western Ghats, which span north of the Sharavathi Valley Wildlife Sanctuary and south of the Aghanashini River Valley. "The study areas were Kyadagi and Siddapur forest ranges in the Sirsi Forest Division, Honnavar, Gersoppa, Bhatkala and Kumta Forest ranges in the Honnavar Forest Division, and Kogar and Kargal forest ranges of the Shivamogga Wildlife Division," said Vasanth Reddy, Conservator of Forests, Canara Circle, who initiated the study.

"It revealed that Uttara Kannada has been a significant and potential site for the conservation of LTMs, considering the sizable canopy and undisturbed habitat as compared to the north of Sharavathi," HN Kumara, Senior Principal Scientist, SACON, said.

He said the department's initiatives, like restoration of canopy and forests and insulating high-tension transmission lines that pass through forest areas of Gerusoppa and other places, have helped in the conservation of LTMs.

This is the first integrated LTM assessment exercise for the Sharavathi Valley Sanctuary, covering both Canara and Shivamogga circles. Earlier, the study focussed only on Canara circle. LTMs are the indicators of evergreen forests as they prefer canopy and are rarely seen on ground.